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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 UNVIE VIENNA 000462

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IR](#) [AF](#) [PAK](#) [SNAR](#)

SUBJECT: UNODC OPERATING ENVIRONMENT IN IRAN TOUGHER AFTER  
ELECTIONS

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Classified By: Ambassador Glyn Davies for reasons 1.4 (c) and (e)

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Tehran Program Head Antonino de Leo emphasized recently that it is more difficult for him to carry out his job in Iran following the presidential elections. In addition to the challenges posed by international wariness regarding continued funding for Iran given the human rights and democracy implications of the recent elections, de Leo has also been faced with Tehran's refusal to grant a UNODC German project coordinator entry into Iran, thus undermining de Leo's efforts to augment his staff. At the same time, de Leo is also concerned that keeping too high a profile will compromise UNODC's ability to implement programs in Iran. De Leo planned to try to reach back out to contacts upon his return to Tehran in late September and was hoping that he would be able to expand his reach into the Office of the Supreme Leader. De Leo also stressed that Pakistan's hesitancy in participating in the Triangular Initiative could inhibit what was becoming a successful regional program. He asked the U.S. to encourage Pakistan to send appropriate representation to the October 27-28 Triangular Initiative Ministerial meeting in Vienna.

¶2. (C) De Leo, who was in Tehran for the presidential elections, called the post-election environment "complete madness." He relayed that President Obama's letter to the Supreme Leader may have inadvertently resulted in the strong Iranian government response to the riots, which included a severe crackdown on former regime officials such as former Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Commander Rezai. End Summary.

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Elections Force UNODC to Ground  
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¶3. (C) In a September 22 meeting, UNODC Tehran Program Head Antonino de Leo stressed that his job in Tehran had become much more difficult since the June presidential elections. De Leo said that he was unable to talk to any of his contacts during the unrest for fear of making himself a target of the government. De Leo said that he now avoids emailing or otherwise directly circulating stories on government drug control efforts (even good news stories) and asks that any such information be passed from UNODC headquarters in Vienna. Noting that, in order to avoid drawing attention to himself and the office, he has taken steps to ensure that his work in Iran is "behind the scenes," de Leo strongly lamented that this new lower profile has

reduced the effectiveness of the groundwork he laid over the previous three months in the job. For example, he had to cancel a briefing for the Mini-Dublin Group ambassadors by the head of Iran's Judiciary scheduled for the week of 26 June as a result of Iran blaming the UK and others for the election-related unrest. Further, de Leo recounted how a BBC journalist who was planning to write "good news" stories on Iranian counternarcotics efforts was kicked out during the unrest, closing a possible avenue of raising public awareness on such efforts in Iran. Nevertheless, the Celebration of World Drug Day in Iran went well, noted de Leo, and his speech was acknowledged and appreciated by both Iranian Permanent Representative to UN Organizations in Vienna Soltanieh and Head of Iran's Drug Control Headquarters Moghadam. De Leo believed that the P5 1 talks in Geneva on October 1 would be the key to moving back toward a collaborative relationship on the ground. He noted that there was a lot of interest in Tehran in the talks.

14. (C) Currently, de Leo explained, he is able to meet with his regular Judiciary contacts and even in the very tense time directly after the elections, he was still able to work with the Iranian government on its corruption self-assessment. Thus, de Leo confirmed, in mid-September, the computer-based training module for anti-money laundering was installed and training has commenced. Although the entire government is not supportive of either UNODC efforts or cooperation with UNODC programs, noted de Leo, pockets of "serious individuals" who want to tackle money laundering, organized crime, and corruption exist, so it is critical to reach out to these individuals to make progress on these issues. Although he has not yet reached out to other contacts, de Leo explained he planned to do so in late September upon his return to Iran. De Leo added that he is also trying to strengthen his contacts with the Office of the

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Supreme Leader, given the importance of those officials in decisionmaking circles. Despite these positive steps, de Leo warned that his staffing level remains far too low, primarily because of funding constraints; if he loses his Italian project coordinator, de Leo stressed, he "won't be able to continue" his work in Iran. His staffing posture was not enhanced, de Leo emphasized, when Iranian authorities refused to allow his newly-hired German project coordinator to enter Iran, claiming he was on a "black list." De Leo stressed that although there is significant funding for Afghanistan--an issue on which Belgium is becoming a key funding partner--donor funding for Iran remains sparse. He added that donors' concerns about human rights and democracy issues in Iran since the elections had further constrained funding for UNODC programs in Iran. On a positive note, with regard to regional efforts, de Leo reported that UNODC has 1.25 million dollars available for the Triangular Initiative's (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran) Joint Planning Cell as soon as Iran signs the agreement, but de Leo is waiting for "the dust to settle" before he approaches the government on the issue.

15. (C) According to de Leo, the Triangular Initiative was going well from the Iranian perspective, but Pakistan viewed it less favorably. Tehran was pushing to do a third joint operation, this one with Pakistan, but Pakistan remained hesitant. In addition, de Leo added, Islamabad had agreed to post a full-time drug liaison officer (DLO) to the Joint Planning Cell, but no officer has yet arrived. The Pakistani government asked UNODC to fund the DLO position, de Leo noted, but de Leo told Islamabad that this officer should be funded by Pakistan as a permanent position. De Leo believed that Pakistan was slow to cooperate because there was a sense in Islamabad that such cooperation only benefits "some" in the government; he did not think Islamabad was worried about recent Iranian activities along the border. De Leo called the proposed Triangular Initiative ministerial meeting to be held on October 27-28 a decisive occasion, but noted that if Pakistan is not willing to send an official at the

ministerial level, Iran would downgrade its own representation from its current plan to send Moghadam. De Leo asked for U.S. help in encouraging Pakistan to send the appropriate-level officials. (Comment: UNVIE can raise this issue with Pakistani counterparts in Vienna but also recommends Washington consider raising in Washington or Islamabad. End Comment.) De Leo added that there will be a one-hour extra session with Major Donors at the ministerial.

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Post-Election Atmospherics  
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16. (C) De Leo further elaborated on the post-election environment in Iran, calling the fallout "complete madness." He said that the Russians were the only ones who predicted riots following the elections and that the regime had become even more militarized in the aftermath. According to de Leo, one of his contacts inside the Iranian government told him President Obama's letter to the Supreme Leader may have provoked in part the tough government response to the riots. The contact, who leaned toward the moderate, explained "we don't need this letter." De Leo also noted that it has become even harder to "check sources" in Iran since the elections, citing a war of information in which everyone is afraid to take a side. In any other country, stressed de Leo, former Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Commander and presidential candidate Rezai would be a "big shot," but in Iran he was suffering the fate of the regime. De Leo recounted how one of Rezai's advisers' sons had disappeared and no one knew what had happened to him; finally, the dead body was delivered to the family and family members it were informed that any mourning would have to be done in private. Other Iranians have noted, added de Leo, that the family was "lucky" that the son was dead because at least family members now know where he is, unlike so many others who have disappeared after the elections. Now, de Leo argued, it is clear who is in charge in Iran and that additional sanctions will strengthen the regime.

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Comment  
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7 (C) UNODC officials based in Tehran continue to provide valuable first-hand information about the situation on the ground in Iran. Despite the negative implications of the Iranian elections, UNODC continues to try to work with Iran on narcotics and crime programs, particularly those related

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to Afghanistan counternarcotics efforts. The Triangular Initiative is a symbolically important step towards regional counternarcotics cooperation, and we should consider encouraging Pakistan to participate more fully. End Comment.  
DAVIES